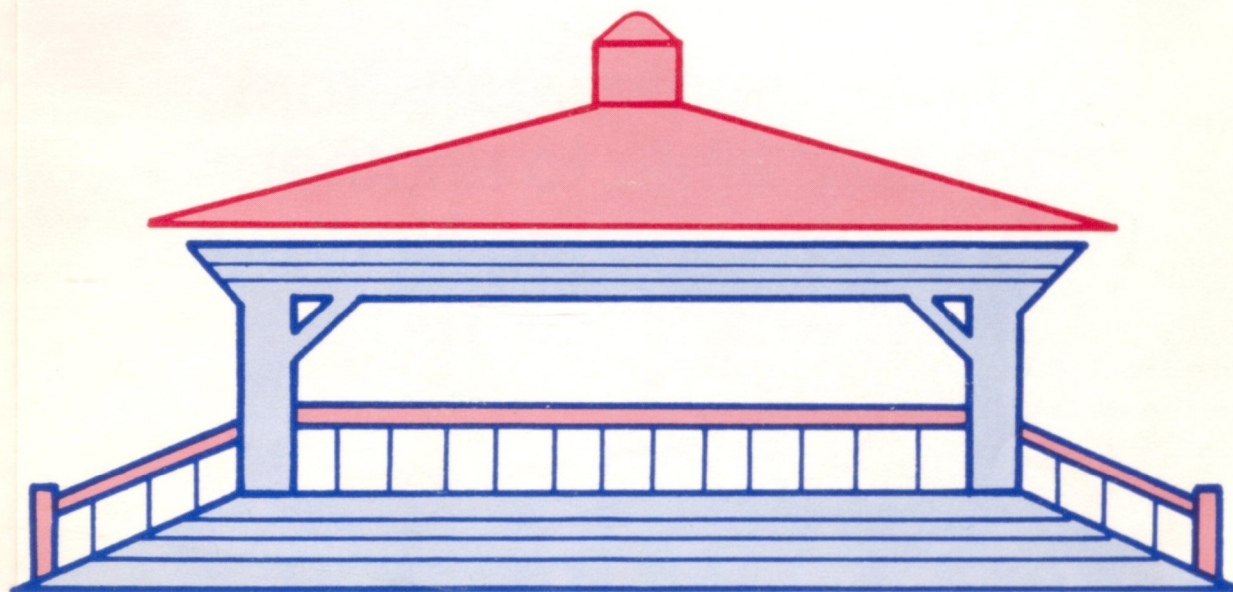


Incorporated April 4, 1910

# HIGHLAND INDIANA Diamond Jubilee

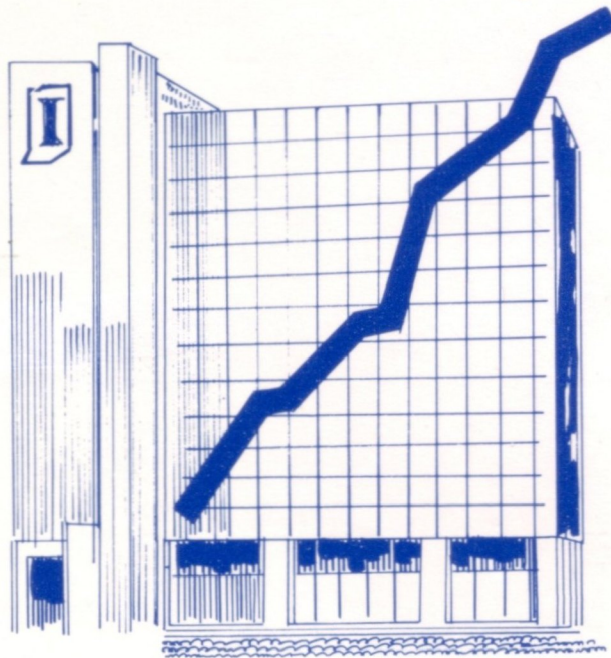


## 1910-1985

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# GROWING WITH HIGHLAND



Happy Anniversary from  
one old timer to another.  
We've been serving Northwest  
Indiana since 1907.

**Bank** of **I**ndiana  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER  
FDIC

HIGHLAND OFFICE  
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Incorporated April 4, 1910 ©

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## PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the corporate Town of Highland, in the fullness of time has marked its seventy-fifth year; and,

WHEREAS, an institution with the seasoning of seventy-five years -- whether it be in matrimony or in a civic community -- should have a celebration - A Diamond Jubilee.

NOW THEREFORE, I, John B. Oakley, President of the Board of Trustees, moved by the moment and as a grateful successor in the tradition first set forth three score and fifteen years ago with Highland's First Town Board President, Charles Wirth, do hereby proclaim April 4, 1985, through September 21, 1985, as Diamond Jubilee Days for Highland's seventy-fifth birthday.

BE IT RESOLVED that the official Diamond Jubilee Committee, the Highland Commemorative Council and the Town Board of Trustees are hereby designated the official sponsors of the Highland Jubilee, and call upon all citizens to share in the joy and history of this special occasion, being legatees in the rich life and pride of the community and that in carrying out a spirit of jubilation in a concerted effort by the community, that:

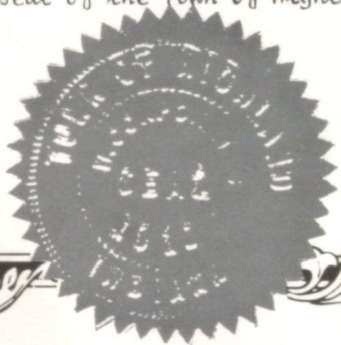
All female citizens wear a ribbon of red, white and blue or headwear of the 1910 period on designated days unless they bear an official exemption permit;

All citizens wear the fashion, or sport town colors of blue and gold on designated days unless they wear an official exemption permit;

All male citizens shall forthwith refrain from shaving unless they wear an official shaving permit during Jubilee Days;

That a Jubilee Court be established in a chosen spot in the downtown area and it be authorized to hold such sessions as necessary during Jubilee Days to enforce the Canons of the Jubilee as set forth and that all citizens believed to be in non-conformity with any of these Canons of the Jubilee be tried in open Jubilee Court, without benefit of counsel, the rules of evidence, but not to be tried twice in jeopardy for the same offense.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of the Town of Highland, this 11th day of April, 1985.



*John B. Oakley*



## The earliest years: 1847 to 1900

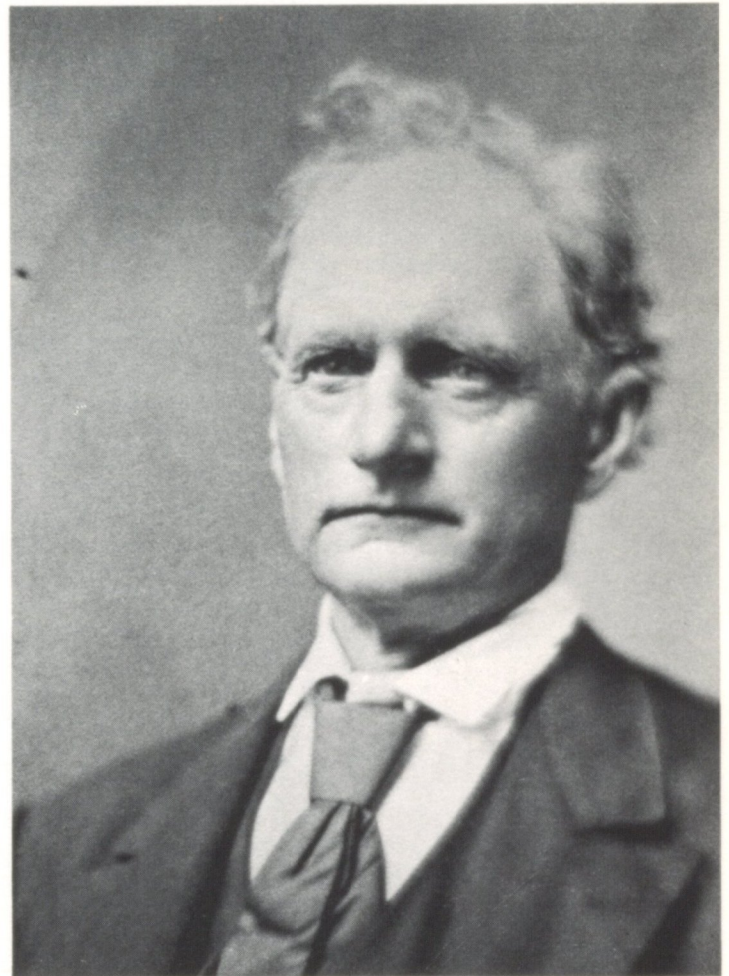
SEVERAL MILLENIA AGO when the primeval glaciers and an infant Lake Michigan retreated from what is now Highland, they left a high sand ridge isolated by tractless swamps and marshes. Although such a condition was ideal for wildlife, especially fur bearing species, humans did not find it particularly inviting for permanent habitation. The American aborigines frequented this region because it was a hunter's paradise and because the ridge provided an easy facility for travel. An abundance of flint projectiles, pottery fragments, and stone axes left by the native Americans attest to their periodic presence. The earliest Europeans to penetrate what is now Highland were the occasional French missionaries or frontiersmen who were merely passing through on the ridge trail.

The first permanent residents of Highland were a young couple, Michael and Judith Johnston, who arrived in 1847 from Ohio. Their intention, like everyone before, was to travel further west away from the swamps. Mrs. Johnston was headed for a teaching position in Bureau County, Illinois. Michael Johnston, enamored of the frontier, was pleased with what he saw in this area. So a year later, the Johnstons returned to settle along the ridge. They built a cabin near the present corner of Ridge Road and Grace Street. There is now a historical marker where the Johnston home stood. Less than a year after their arrival, on March 15, 1848, their son Rod was born.

In these early years, Mr. Johnston and his son hunted and fished regularly. The Little Calumet River and the swamps served as a source of food and livelihood. Deer were plentiful enough that Johnston decorated the trees along the ridge with antlers. His son, Rod, so the story goes, one winter during a very cold spell, found a flock of ducks frozen in the ice on the Little Calumet. With a stick he harvested enough ducks to buy 20 acres of land selling at \$1.25 per acre. Muskrats were trapped by the thousands, the pelts of which sold for five to ten cents each. After the "freeze up" trappers would also use long spears to capture muskrats under the ice.

Initially the Johnstons and others had to go to LaPorte or Winamac for legal transactions. Mail was received at Lansing, Illinois and at Gibson Tavern (now Gary). The nearest neighbors of the

Johnstons were the Mundells, who lived a half mile east of Hobart, and the Allen Brass family, owners of the Brass Tavern who lived at the corner of Columbia Avenue and Ridge Road in Munster. Isolation was very real, particularly in winter. Taverns served as travel outposts on the frontier. In time of need, any home such as the Johnstons was a welcome site. Travelers also served as the major source of news from the rest of the nation. Highland's second family, Solomon and Mary Morton, the parents of Judith Johnston, arrived in late 1848. They stayed for a few years before moving to Ross Township.



Michael Johnston



## Settling the Swamps

When the U.S. Congress passed the Swamp Land Act of 1851, most of Northwest Indiana became subject to that law. Land was offered to the public at \$1.25 per acre with the condition that efforts be made to drain the land. Michael Johnston and other early settlers were able to purchase large tracts of land under this law, although little was done immediately to promote drainage.

Ditching, begun after the Civil War, provided drainage to much of Highland's swamplands. Today the Hart "Big" Ditch and the Cady Marsh Ditch are often regarded as nuisances without realizing their significance to Highland's past as well as present. The Hart Ditch, begun in the early 1860's by Aaron Hart, channeled Plum Creek from Dyer, Indiana to the Little Calumet River. The Cady Marsh Ditch was dug to drain off water trapped behind the sand ridge. The critical cut was through the sand ridge on the Highland-Munster line. The work was done with teams of oxen pulling plows and later skid boxes loaded with sand from the trench.

Progressively the general water level was lowered with the Little Calumet being lowered in 1915 by the Burns Ditch in East Gary. However, due primarily to the geography of the region, the Little Calumet and other streams will periodically continue to spill over their banks as they always have done.



The greatest conflagration in Highland's history occurred October 8, 1871. The weather had been exceptionally dry when the peat bogs of the Cady Marsh caught fire. The Cady Marsh, which had been partly drained, burned. The fire sped north until it was stopped by the water of the Little Calumet River. People and beasts escaped the flames by entering the river. Curiously, that same day many great fires occurred throughout the Midwest, including the Chicago Fire.

Rod Johnston, son of Michael and Judith, married Rhoda Pierce of Merrillville. Prior to his early death in 1886, Rod and Rhoda had four children: Grace Johnston Douthett, Iola Johnston Jansen, Daisy Johnston Jamieson, and Wilton Johnston. Descendants of those children still reside in Highland. Mrs. Rhoda Johnston lived on in Highland until 1915. She became a civic and business leader in town and helped organize the People's Church and also operated a general store. She, as well as other early settlers from Highland, is buried in the old Ross Cemetery in Ross Township.

## "Tracks of Progress"

The "tracks of progress" reached Highland in 1883 in the form of the Chicago & Atlantic Railroad (later part of the Erie system). When the railroad surveyors reached the sand ridge after surveying miles of swamp, they wrote "Highlands" on their charts — almost in exclamation. That eventually led to our town's present name. The same year that the railroad arrived, John Clough (old timers pronounced it to rhyme with "rough"), a substantial landowner, platted the town. Apparently he believed that where a major wagon trail



This Erie railroad station burned and was replaced by a boxcar for a period of time. This station was once a milk stop.





This picture shows early town citizens on steps of Rhoda Johnston's general store. The store was located where the parking lot of Marvin's Restaurant and Lounge is now located.

intersected a new railroad, a town would surely develop. He laid out First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth streets north and south; and Highway, Jewett, Wicker, Clough, and Lincoln streets east and west. The railroads therefore designated Highland as Clough Postal Station for purposes of mail delivery. That name was soon superseded by the title given the area by the railroad surveyors — Highlands.

The Chesapeake & Ohio, paralleling the Erie tracks, arrived in 1902. A station was built between the two tracks to serve both railroads. "Highlands" was a regular station stop. In 1905 the Chicago, Indiana & Southern Railroad (later the New York Central) laid a double track just west of downtown and also built a station at Highway Avenue. Today only one track of the New York Central (now Conrail) remains. The only other railroad that passes through Highland is the Grand Trunk Western on the far south side of town. It arrived in 1880, but the station stops were built in towns west and east of Highland.

The impact of the railroads in Highland and elsewhere was keenly felt in agriculture and other businesses. Production was boosted because a reliable form of transportation to markets had been created. Dressed lumber homes and new iron machinery replaced the more primitive forms used until then. The sand ridge, particularly between Kennedy Avenue and Cottage Grove, briefly supported a mining industry when the railroads and brick-makers discovered that ready source of fill.

Typically at the turn of the century, transportation was by train or horse and carriage, water came from a lift pump near the back door of each farm house, outhouses were the extent of plumbing,



Great expanses of Highland's glacial ridge were sandmined. The sand was removed for railroad beds, landfill, and brick making.

lighting came from kerosene lamps, heating and cooking were done over wood and coal stoves. Mosquitoes and flies were particularly troublesome during the summer months.

## Early Glimpses

Newspaper accounts of that day give glimpses of life in Highlands, such as residents commuting regularly to nearby towns on the railroad, services available at the blacksmith shop, a saloon bill of fare, dirt roads being improved with clay, special shopping trips to Chicago, news of an itinerant preacher, cabbage shipped by the carload on trains, and changes in personnel at the train stations. Names appearing regularly in the news included Johnston, Douthett, Zyp, Hutchens, Newell, Jansen, Ohmstead, and Kikkert.

The business district in Highland in 1900 was comprised of a kraut factory, church, a blacksmith shop with a town meeting hall, two general stores, several homes, and pasture. The general stores served as the post office as well. Curiously, if the Republicans controlled Washington, Mr. Ben Swets' General Store housed the post office; if the Democrats controlled Washington, Mrs. Rhoda Johnston's General Store had the post office.

Education was the earliest organized community effort in Highland. The first classes were conducted for about 11 years by Judith Johnston in her home. (Judith Johnston Elementary School honors Highland's first teacher.) A school house was built in 1858. This wood frame building stood south of Ridge Road near Liable Road. Because there were no desks, students sat on stools. This school was later moved to 3522 Highway Avenue where it still stands as a private residence. A second and larger wood frame school was constructed in 1884. It originally stood at the south central edge of Main Square. One room served eight grades. Conditions were spartan. Children sat in double desks, water was served by pail and dipper, slates were used for lessons, and discipline was maintained by corporal punishment. That building was later moved to its current location at 3208 Ridge Road, where it too became a private residence.



These workers are harvesting onion sets on a Highland truck farm.



This is an early general store on Jewett Street belonging to John Kortenhoven. The date is 1927.





Parts of this well-kept Highland home were first built in 1858 as Highland's first schoolhouse. The original structure was moved to its present spot on Highway Avenue years later. Many of Highland's first homes were moved to different locations.



The building on the left was Highland's first bank building. It stood at the northeast corner of Kennedy and Highway. The home housed the town's first telephone switchboard in its living room.





# The formative years: 1890 to 1945

ABOUT 1890, immigrant Dutch settlers began moving into Highland from Munster and surrounding areas where earlier Dutch farming colonies had been established. Forty years prior, the Dutch had initiated settlements on the prairies south of Chicago. Continually looking for new lands on which to locate their vegetable gardens, they found Highland by progressively reaching eastward along the sand ridge now known as Ridge Road.

Initially the Dutch lived a separate but parallel existence with the original inhabitants of Highland. Isolated by religious practices, separate education, language, and partially by occupation, their involvement with natives was mostly limited to business transactions.

The earliest Dutch church was a small structure on Jewett Street (near the west side of the current library). It was a private church built for one Jacob Schoon by his son-in-law, Peter Kooy, a popular builder. Schoon had moved to Highland from Lansing, Illinois about 1890. Because of that distance, he decided to build and supervise a church for himself and his followers. A divisive man, he successfully alienated his fellow church members by 1900, which in turn led to the demise of the congregation.

Another church, the Peoples Church of Highlands, was organized in 1899. Prior to that time, church travelling ministers met the religious needs of Highland's residents. Services would be conducted in Highlands Hall, a meeting room above the blacksmith shop on the southwest corner of Kennedy and Highway Avenues. Rev. Timothy Ball, a prominent Crown Point minister and historian, occasionally led those services. The membership was made up of earlier non-Dutch settlers as well as some displaced Dutch families. That congregation built a church in the 2900 block of Jewett Street on land donated by the Clough family. It stood until 1976, having served continuously as a religious center for several denominations. About 1934, the original congregation split. The half keeping the church took a Baptist affiliation. The other group, meeting first in the basement of

Main School, associated with the Presbyterian Church in 1937.

As numbers of Dutch continued to move to Highland, the Christian Reformed Church was organized. Many had been worshipping in Munster at the Christian Reformed Church there. Desiring to have their own community congregation as well as eliminate the journey to Munster, the Dutch began in 1908 to hold services in the abandoned Schoon church. Because of its limited size, that building was replaced in 1909 by a new edifice on Highway Avenue (where the Bell office building now stands), which served till 1939.

## Early Industries

Libby, McNeil, and Libby located a plant in Highland about 1904 (where the Highland Lumber Company is presently located) to take advantage of the abundant garden crops grown by the Dutch and other gardeners. Tomatoes, pickles, and cabbage were received and processed at the plant. At the height of the harvest season, dozens of wagons would line up at the docks on Jewett Street with as much as 60 tons of cabbage brought in a day. Many of the farmers began to peddle their vegetables in the nearby mill towns when Libbys refused to honor its contracts or when there was excellent crop production. Other produce companies such as the Lake County Produce Company also set up receiving stations in town to process the locally grown crops.

Another early industry was the Gary Granite and Stone Company. Taking advantage of the abundant ridge sand, the firm produced "sand brick," which was a popular local building material. The plant closed in 1916. The small community also had its first bank established in 1914. The Farmers and Merchants Bank was located on the northeast corner of Highway and Kennedy Avenues. The bank's second story had a private entrance for other businesses and a pool hall. The bank sadly closed during the Depression in February, 1932.



Ed VanTil cultivating pickles with horse.



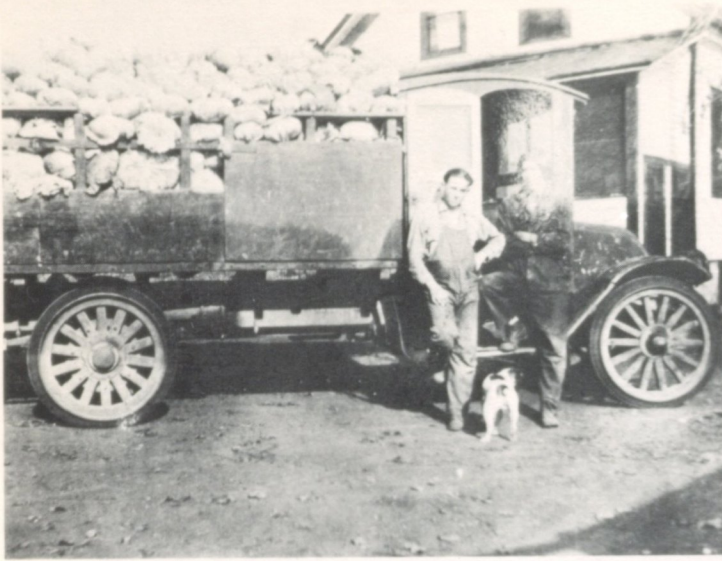
The little church on Jewett Street built by Jacob Schoon in 1890. It later served as the Christian Reformed Church and also as the first Christian school.



Prairie just northeast of downtown where Our Lady of Grace Church now stands. Note Main School at center left, People's Church in center, and town hall at center right.







A load of cabbage ready for delivery to the kraut factory. John Zandstra (left) and Ted Bakker (right).

A General Store which went through several Dutch proprietorships was located on Jewett Street near Kennedy Avenue. It is still standing and was a grocery store until about 1965.

The oldest operating business in Highland is Zandstra Farm. Begun in 1920, it is the last Dutch vegetable farm in Highland. The Chamber of Commerce, organized in 1925, still is serving the Highland business community.

To protect the town from fire, a volunteer brigade was organized in 1914. Equipment was little more than a hand pulled pumping cart with hose and chemicals.

## Incorporation

Highland was incorporated into a legal town in 1910. There were 304 people living in the established limits. A referendum conducted March 26, 1910 showed an overwhelming desire of the residents to incorporate. The vote was 92 to 1 in favor of incorporation with the present boundaries defined. The county commissioners responding to the referendum, issued an order of incorporation for Highland on April 4, the legal birth date. There were 110 registered voters. Curiously, the North Township government decided to contest the desire of Highland residents because, in its opinion, too much territory was included. Ignoring that threat, the people of Highland met on April 13 to nominate men for the town board. Part of their proceedings are excerpted here:

"The nominations made are as follows: Trustee 1st Ward — P. J. Kooy; Trustee 2nd Ward — J. H. Douthett; Trustee 3rd Ward — Chas. Wirth; Clerk — Henry S. Dougherty; Treasurer — Henry J. Lynch; and Marshal — George Stonebreaker.

"No politics entered into the nominations were made without regard to the party affiliations and upon the basis of fitness and the confidence in which they are held by the people." [sic] LAKE NEWS, April 14, 1910

A few days later, on April 16, an uncontested election with only 60 votes cast gave Highland its first town board. The official name was HIGHLANDS.



Dick Huizenga, one of Highland's World War I veterans.





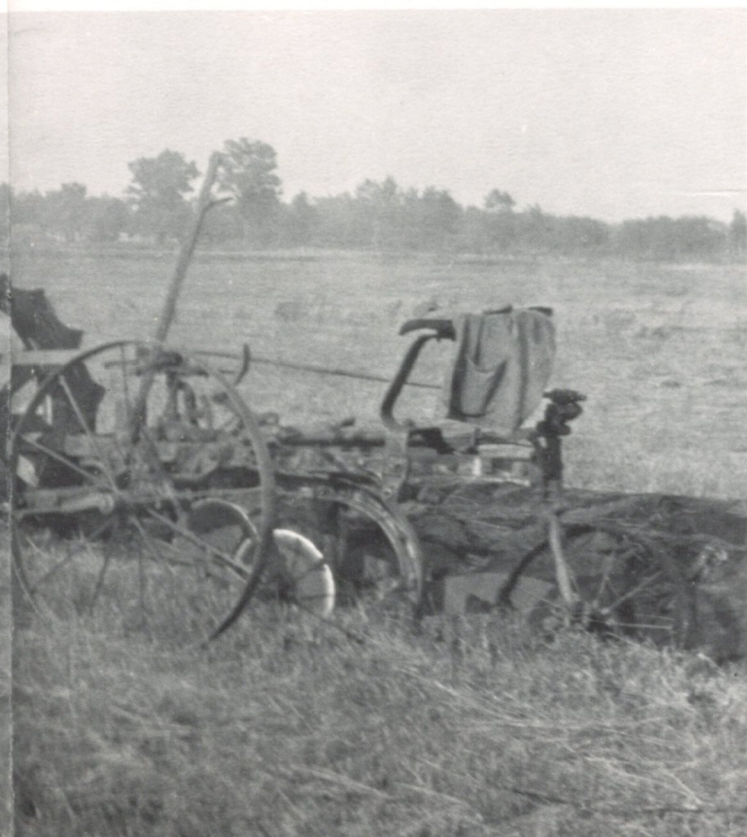
The third public school house, a fine brick structure built in 1897 on the corner of 4th and Highway Avenue served the students of Highland until 1915 when Main School was completed to accommodate the growing student population. The abandoned school was converted into the town hall and remained so until a new municipal complex was completed in 1969. Main School, located where the town gazebo now stands, served as Highland's only public school until 1947. Additions were made in 1925 and in 1939.

The Dutch, true to their Calvinist faith, in 1909 established a private school, Highland Christian School, to educate their children. It was first housed in the vacant church on Jewett Street across from the Libby plant docks. With an expanding student population, a new two-story brick school was constructed on Highway Avenue in 1917. That building served until 1951 when the present structure on Ridge Road was completed.

### Clouds of Trouble

The storm clouds of World War I slowly gathered the United States into the conflict by 1917. The Calumet Region had by that time produced large numbers of volunteer troops for the various national armies of Europe. The Dutch in Highland initially tried to be neutral as was their native land, the Netherlands. However, a group of Dutch farmers took pains to record in the minutes of their

Breaking the tough prairie grass with a Fordson tractor and two-bottom plows on Zandstra's Farm.



farmers' cooperative their loyalty to the United States as well as a desire for a speedy conclusion to the conflict. Highland produced ten veterans, six of whom were Dutch. There were also five war loan drives in which Highland met its quota, small as it was.

Independence Day was often celebrated in Wicker Park with a community picnic that was first begun by the Dutch citizens in 1919. These picnics, which continued until the 1950's, were a popular community event, particularly when fireworks were added in 1940. Wicker Memorial Park was converted from pasture to a dedicated park in 1927 to commemorate the soldiers of World War I. Several prominent area businessmen were instrumental in creating the park, which was comprised of several small Dutch farms and a pleasant tract of forest. The park land was disannexed from Highland. Dedication was led by no one less than the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge — the only president to ever visit Highland.



President Calvin Coolidge at the dedication of Wicker Park in 1927.



## Seeds of Change

Although Highland was still a rural farming community in the mid-1920's, its present status as a suburban community already had its beginnings then. Two tracts of farmland now known as the Hook Subdivision and Brantwood were platted into home sites by 1925.

When the impact of the Depression of 1929 struck Highland several businesses, including the lumber yard and bank, failed financially. Life was filled with a fear of the unknown. Many things that had provided security to people were gone. Often finding enough to eat was a task. Because Highland was a farming town, the residents were often able to meagerly produce enough to eat. Government aid eventually provided some foods as well as jobs. One project in Highland was the relocation of Ridge Road over the railroads.

Farming during this same period became an arduous year-round task. When snow was still on the ground, seeds were begun in cold frames and hot beds so that plants could be set out when spring arrived. During the summer, vegetables were cultivated and harvested from dawn to dusk. Peddling

the produce usually began about midnight and continued to noon of the same day. With the onset of fall, plowing began for the next season. During the winter months, manure would be hauled from rail cars parked at the Hayes spur on 45th Street and the New York Central tracks to fertilize the fields.

The years between the two world wars were the prohibition and gangster era. Highland, too, had its share of vice. Several stills, one of large capacity, were uncovered in town. The Farmers & Merchants Bank was also held up on December 15, 1930. The bandits escaped by driving their bullet riddled car past a locomotive that was moving through town.

As Highland, along with the nation, slowly emerged from the Depression, the winds of war once again began to blow in Europe and Asia. Again the young men of Highland were called to serve the defense of freedom in World War II.

With the war over in 1945 and veterans returning, a new attitude of change was developing in Highland. The agricultural base was beginning to disappear. New businesses were filling Highway Avenue making it the prime business street in town. Building contractors were seriously studying



Jewett Street near Kennedy Avenue looking east, about 1938.



the prairies and farms near downtown for home sites. A theater was built, as well as a modern dairy plant. There was even a referendum that failed, which would have turned Highland into a city form of government. As new residents moved from the older mill towns to the north, the rural character of Highland quite completely disappeared. New businesses, churches, and schools were formed to meet the needs of these people. A second public school was built on farm land at Lincoln Street in 1946. This was the beginning of 20 years of rapidly expanding school needs.



Farmers & Merchants Bank, 1924.



# Highland: the post World War II years

THE LARGEST GROWTH in Highland has taken place since World War II. As with most American towns, the so-called "baby boom" was evident and very influential in Highland's history. Highland's growth over the years is evident in the following population comparisons:

## Highland's population growth

1940 - 2,723

1950 - 5,878

1960 - 17,097

1970 - 24,947

1980 - 25,935

Because of its nature as a 'bedroom' community for larger cities to the north, Highland's population today is comprised of people who trace their roots elsewhere. Many Highlanders in 1985 are sons and daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of people who started out in the industrial Lake County centers of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond. The southward trend of population growth is highly responsible for Highland's status today as a community whose families began elsewhere but who have chosen to stay here and remain active in the town's mainstream.

A youngster who grew up in Highland in the post-World War II era can look back to tree-lined streets where summer shade has increased with the growth of the trees, many of which were seedlings in the 1950's and 1960's.

Highland is self-governed by its people, and plans are aimed for the future, the children of tomorrow. Highland is definitely a town of long-range stability and full of civic pride.

While Highland remains basically a residential community, it still offers nearly every modern convenience necessary, from shopping centers and supermarkets to spacious parks and second-to-none schools. Highland's families are well-protected by an excellent police department and efficient volunteer fire department, which operates two well-equipped stations.

Highland's strategic location near Lake Michigan and Chicago is a true advantage. One of the pleasures of Highland living is being able to enjoy suburban life, sitting on your front porch, or getting in your car and driving a half hour north (on a good day) to America's third largest city or driving less than a half hour south to the honest-to-

goodness Midwest heartland of cornfields, silos, and livestock.

The real springboard of Highland's status as a town today took place as World War II wound to a close. In a 1945 referendum, residents chose to continue the town form of government, even though population figures allowed Highland to become a city. Until the incorporation of Merrillville, Highland's motto was "Indiana's Largest Town." Being second in size to Merrillville certainly hasn't caused Highland to take a back seat in any way to anyone or anyplace.

A principal aim for Highland has been to consistently improve and strengthen itself, while not turning its back on the past and its rich history. A fine example of this is the Highland Memorial Library. The building, at 4th Street and Highway, was dedicated on May 15, 1947 as a living tribute to the town's war veterans. Highland's growth necessitated the construction of a new building in 1966.

Located only a half-block from the original library, the new structure at 4th Street and Jewett Street is operated through the Lake County system. Books are loaned and available on a county-wide basis. The old library building still stands, and it serves as a thriving business location and a reminder of Highland's younger days.



WAR!!! A typical Highland kitchen at the outbreak of World War II.





Democracy in action: Highland's Town Board is inaugurated January 1, 1956.



Dedication of Highland Memorial Library, May 15, 1947.

Highland also outgrew its space in the old Town Hall, which called for a larger municipal building at 3333 Ridge Road. In addition to being home for the town's governmental offices since 1970, the police department is also housed in the structure's lower level.

The central fire station at 4th Street and Highway was completed in 1972, where it stands on the site of the old Town Hall. Highland's fire department was expanded in 1975 with the construction of the south side station on 45th Street.

A definite trend of growth and expansion was continued at the federal level, as Highland built a more spacious post office in 1975. Bids were accepted for the project in October, 1974, with \$414,000 budgeted for construction. The land at Kennedy Avenue and LaPorte Street was purchased from Checker Oil Company in 1971 for \$70,000.

In addition to the U.S. Post Office, 1975 was a year in which Highland residents witnessed an even greater symbol of American pride: the dedication of the Highway of Flags Monument.

Dedication ceremonies took place on Memorial Day, 1975. The event's main speaker was Brigadier General David Winn, a former POW, but the real guest of honor was Indiana's 'Flag Lady,' Mary Lou Kieswetter. Another key speaker was U.S. Representative Ray J. Madden, who brought with him a letter from President Ford, expressing regrets for not being able to attend. The Air Force Band played, and thus Mrs. Kieswetter, along with her National Council for the Encouragement of Patriotism, fulfilled her dream of a nationally recognized Highway of Flags along U.S. Route 41, which stretches from Florida to Michigan. For the

past ten years, this monument has been a source of pride for Highland and a national display of our appreciation for those who fought and died to keep our country the free nation it remains today. The towering flagpoles at Ridge Road and Indianapolis Boulevard are a reflection of the United States of America, from north and south, a bond of our heritage.

Highland's numerous community parks are the core of civic activity and draw the townspeople together for countless activities such as athletics, outdoor musicals, picnicking, bicycling, and relaxation for all.

Highland's largest park, Wicker Memorial Park, isn't owned or operated by the town. It is run by the North Township Trustees' office. It boasts the largest outdoor swimming pool in Indiana.

Probably the best known park is Main Square for it links Highland's present with the very early history. The six acres of land at 5th Street and Highway, now known as Main Square, were originally part of the Valparaiso End Moraine, which was a border of Lake Michigan. Land speculators bought this property for development when the downtown area to the west was developed. The land served the school children until Main School closed permanently in 1972.

Community groups liked the idea of developing the area as a town focal point. In 1977, the School Board removed the school building from this site. The Park and Recreation Board negotiated a lease



for the land with the school town one year later. A U.S. Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation grant was secured through the state of Indiana Department of Natural Resources. These monies, with matching funds provided by the Town of Highland Board of Trustees and various community groups, developed this park. Matching the federal grant of \$62,500, the Town of Highland built Main Square Park. The gazebo, and its surrounding picnic and playground areas and open spaces, was dedicated to the people of Highland on May 25, 1981, with the late Representative Adam Benjamin as keynote speaker.

Today, Main Square is synonymous with Highland, and it is a place where Highlanders gather for relaxation, festivals, music and theatre, and even weddings. It's a place Highland residents can share and call home, and it has definitely brought our community into closer harmony. And harmony is a positive factor here. The Town of Highland, working with the Park and Recreation Department, has succeeded in smooth transitions more than once — Main School to Main Square Park, and Lincoln School to Lincoln Center are two prime examples. The phenomenon of turning school owned property into recreation centers signals a specific change in Highland: we're getting older.

Highland's school corporation today consists of four elementary schools, a junior high, and a senior high. The elementary schools are Johnston, on the north side of town, and Southridge, Merkle, and Warren, all south of Ridge Road. In the peak years, Highland boasted seven public elementary schools and two non-public schools (Our Lady of Grace Catholic and Highland Christian). Main School closed in 1972, and Orchard Park and Lincoln closed in 1981 due to declining enrollment. Two non-public schools still remain a vital educational choice in Highland.

There was a time when projections were made that Highland would have a population of 43,000 by the year 1990, and that the schools would see an increased enrollment of 75% from the high of 6,878 students in the 1971-1972 school year. In fact, the past 13 years have whittled the enrollment to 3,641 for the 1984-1985 school year. The population of 25,935 in 1980 seems to have stabilized, leaving the projection of a 43,000 population and rising school enrollment very doubtful, for any year, and certainly not 1990. The community is growing older, gracefully, and families are becoming smaller in recent years.



Main School kindergarten class, with Mrs. Marian York, teacher — November, 1946. Mrs. York taught kindergarten in Highland for 27 years.



Stately Highland High School — 28 years old in 1985 — but forever young in the students it serves.



Private education is alive and well in the town. Highland Christian School is a testimony to the choices we have for our youth.



### Capsule summary of Highland schools

School	Built	Closed	Razed
Main School	1915	1972	1977
Lincoln	1946	1981	
Highland Christian	1951		
Orchard Park	1953	1981	
Our Lady of Grace	1954		
Johnston	1955		
Highland High	1957		
Southridge	1959		
Junior High	1963		
Merkley	1964		
Warren	1970		



1953 — the good old days in Highland. A T-Bone steak, salad, fries, and coffee would set you back just \$1.50 at friendly Ada's Sandwich Shop on Highway Avenue.



Former Highland library building still serving residents as a business.

Even as a "growing older" community, Highland never seems to lose its appeal to business. Highland's Chamber of Commerce was established in January, 1958. It boasted 76 charter members when incorporation was accomplished on March 10, 1958. The town had a chamber of commerce before the present one. A chamber existed in 1926, as notice of a meeting on April 5, 1926, was published. The current chamber offices are at 8536 Kennedy Avenue, and about 200 businesses are now listed.

With all the positive aspects about Highland, there was a time that annexation by Hammond existed as a possibility. In April, 1954, Robert Ross, Highland Town Trustee, and attorney Charles Levin of Hammond, actually debated the issue. Levin told a crowd of 300 at the American Legion Hall that Highland should be annexed before "it is too late."

"It is almost a luxury to live in the suburbs," Levin said. "You have no court, no health department, none of the things Hammond residents have for less money in taxes." Needless to say, most Highland residents did not favor annexation. At the time, Ross asked Levin what would be in Hammond's favor by annexing Highland. He said "Hammond cannot grow walled in with suburbs as it is. When the building lots are gone, the town will start deteriorating." Anyone who has lived in this area since 1954 can draw their own conclusions from this HAMMOND TIMES quote.

Highland has managed to sidestep many of the problems associated with rapid growth. A 400% population increase from 1950 to 1970 went as smoothly as possible, with Plan Commission members denying spot zoning petitions as a matter of practice.

In 1983, more than 90% of Highland's approximately 8,514 homes were owner-occupied. This indicates Highland is here to stay and certainly not a whistle-stop. In fact, Highland is not only the second largest town in Indiana, but the 23rd largest community in population in the state. The population growth triggered an upward median home value that is estimated at \$56,300. The average household income is \$26,832. Highland does depend on Hammond for its water supply and sewage treatment. Even so, Highland is responsible for its own water tanks, sewer mains, and residential transmission systems for both services. In 1983, Highland had the fourth lowest water rate in Lake County.



Highland also had the fourth lowest public spending (\$205) per person for all municipal services. Savings are enormous, for example, by having an all-volunteer fire department. It's a cost-cutting measure that saves the town over \$1 million annually. Who can argue with that?

The money saved by Highland people is very often channeled to other important community focal points, such as houses of worship. There are 17 churches in Highland, representing nearly all faiths. Religious beliefs are diverse, but a unified strength of the town.

POSITIVE is a word that can describe Highland. Even in the face of adversity, the people are united. Highland struggled to remain independent. We are not the Highland neighborhood of Hammond today, as earlier mentioned was at one time a possibility.

The March, 1979 dog drug search case, the 1973 teachers' strike, and the 1981 Highland Lumber Company fire, for instance, were events that could all have led to negativism or failure in other communities.

The drug search put Highland in the national spotlight, and maybe this wasn't the best way to showcase the town. But the focus on our schools proved there wasn't apathy here. The July, 1980 ruling said school officials acted within Constitutional limits when they sent dogs sniffing for drugs at the junior and senior high schools. The majority of students, parents, and residents were pleased that if a drug problem existed, it was being tackled and not overlooked.

The teachers' strike at the start of the 1973-74 school year strained public opinion of Highland's educational leaders. But when the dust cleared, it was onward and upward for the Highland schools with no compromise in learning standards.

Even the devastating Highland Lumber Company fire in March, 1981 caused only a temporary setback in the business community. Today the lumber company is flourishing, pinpointing Highland's track record of overcoming adversity.

The Topps Discount Store fire in 1962 didn't leave a scar on Highland. Today this is the site of a bustling shopping center headed by Ultra Foods.

The demise of Community Discount, which earlier was Shopper's World, only briefly allowed concern over whether a possible eyesore would exist on our busiest north-south thoroughfare (Route 41). Today none other than Highland Plaza, still growing, occupies that land. The success stories go on and on . . .

Flooding in the late 50's near the Little Calumet River and subsequent basement water in homes through the years has been an irritating and understandable concern for "flood plain" residents. But



Our Lady of Grace Church represents one of several denominations serving Highland's spiritual needs.



A jewel in the downtown district is the Central Fire Station.



the problem is held in check, and although heavy rains still create havoc at times, very few families seem to be leaving because of this.

For every problem, there is a solution. When Highland celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 1960, the priorities were very different. Just about everything was new and improved. It was a Boom Town in the Gold Rush tradition of the mid-19th century.

Questions in 1960 were "Where are we going to put all these kids?" and "How can we build homes fast enough to meet the demand?" The answers then were simple: build more schools and develop new subdivisions. The questions in 1985 are "How are we going to fill the empty classrooms?" and "What is the best way to keep the neighborhoods from aging too fast?"

Some of the answers are only for the future to unlock. We know the schools can have a resurgence, and we know Highland's pioneers of the Baby Boom 50's are today's grandparents. But we also can find comfort in knowing part of Highland's tomorrow is playing in grandma's backyard or enjoying grandpa's swing. And if Highland has been good enough for them, why not stay?



Mr. Softball greets Highlanders and visitors as they enter the town on Kennedy Avenue.



The Highway of Flags monument, a symbol of patriotism that runs deep in our community.



Highland keeps pace with growth. Here is a view of the current Municipal Building.



A picturesque park scene that is repeated throughout Highland.



# 1985 Activities

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## March \_\_\_\_\_

- 30—Adult Table Tennis Tournament  
Lincoln Center
- 30—Arts and Crafts  
Wicker Park - Club RAP

- 22—Combined Church Choirs  
Main Square
- 29—Diamond Jubilee Ball  
Wicker Park Social Center
- 30—Neighborhood Picnics  
Highland Parks

## April \_\_\_\_\_

- 4—Highland Incorporation Day
- 11—Diamond Jubilee Luncheon  
Wicker Park Social Center
- 4-27—Education Weeks
- 20-21—Calumet Gem and Mineral Show  
Highland High School
- 27-28—Youth Table Tennis Tournament  
Lincoln Center

## July \_\_\_\_\_

- 1- 6—Diamond Jubilee Week  
Main Square
- 3- 6—Arts and Crafts - Food, Entertainment  
Main Square
- 4—Kiddie Parade, Fireworks  
Highland Junior High School,  
Kennedy Avenue Mile
- 6—Two-Light Night Parade to Main Square
- 11-14—St. James Festival
- 25-27—Park and Recreation Play - Hello Dolly  
Main Square
- 18-20—Park and Recreation Play - Hello Dolly  
Main Square
- 19-26—National Babe Ruth Tournament  
Homestead Park
- 31—Chamber of Commerce Dollar Day

## May \_\_\_\_\_

- 11—Police Fair
- 12-18—Armed Service Week  
Main Square
- 18—Display of Equipment - Army, Navy, Marines
- 18—Scouts Penny Fair
- 18—Chamber of Commerce Arts and Crafts
- 23-25—Park and Recreation Play - Snoopy  
Main Square
- 27—Highland Family Day Picnic-Dance  
Wicker Park Pavillion
- 27—Memorial Day - Highway of Flags
- 30- 1—Park and Recreation Play - Snoopy  
Main Square

## August \_\_\_\_\_

- 2—Rotary Corn Roast
- 2- 4—National Softball Tournament
- 4-10—Country Week
- 10—Chuck Wagon Dinner  
Main Square
- 11—Sox Game - Bus Trip
- 17—Highland Days Dance

## June \_\_\_\_\_

- 8—Beauty Pageant Finals  
Highland High School
- 9-15—Ethnic Week  
Main Square
- 16-22—Religious Week

## September \_\_\_\_\_

- 8-14—Fire Department Week
  - 20-21—Chamber Fall Festival  
Main Square
-



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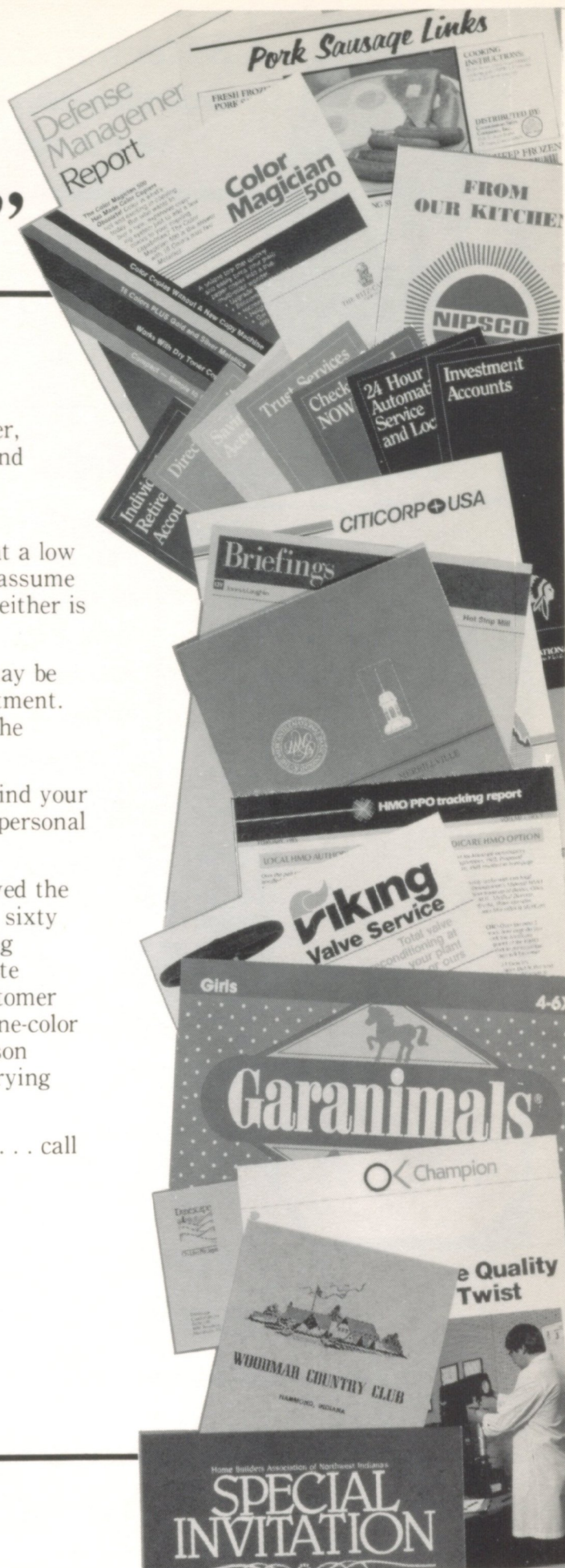
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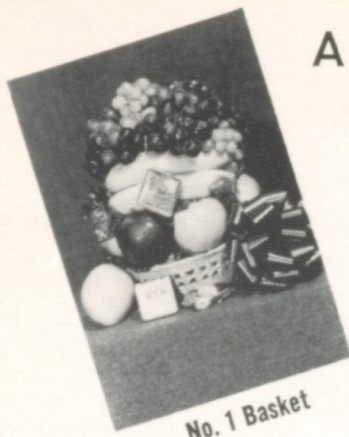
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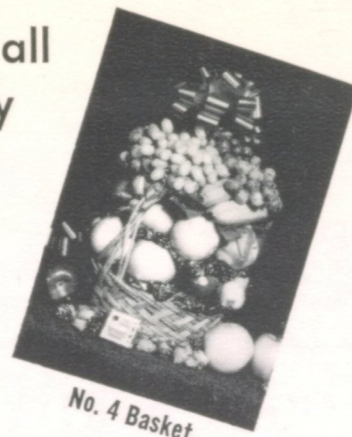
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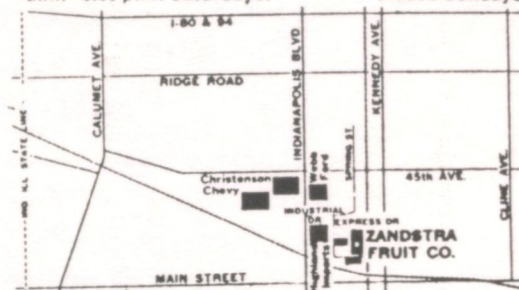
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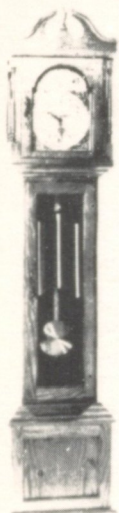
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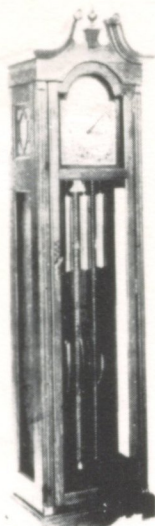
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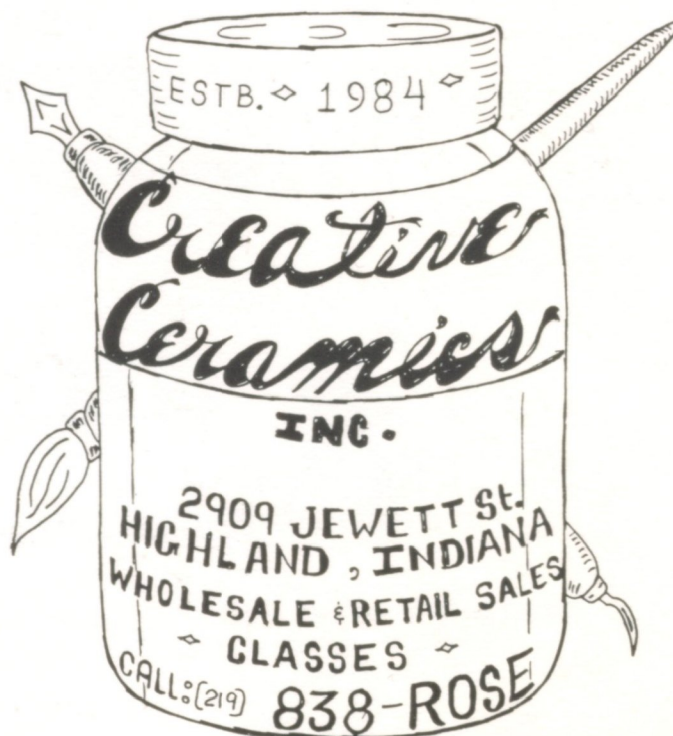
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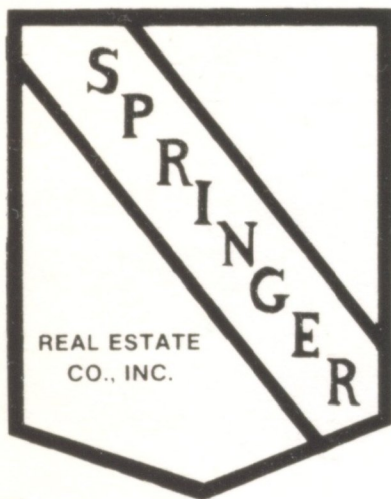




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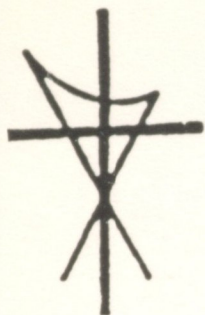
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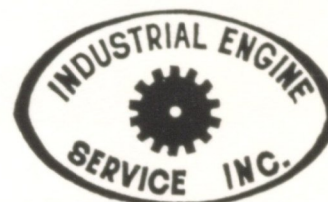
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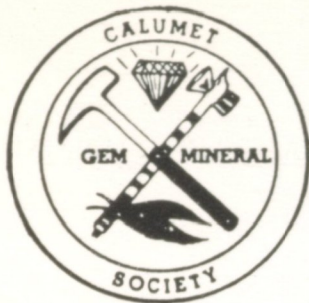
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Highland Extension Homemakers meet every second Thursday of the month excluding summer months at 10:00 a.m. with a pot luck luncheon. Meetings are held at the First Presbyterian Church, Highland, Indiana.

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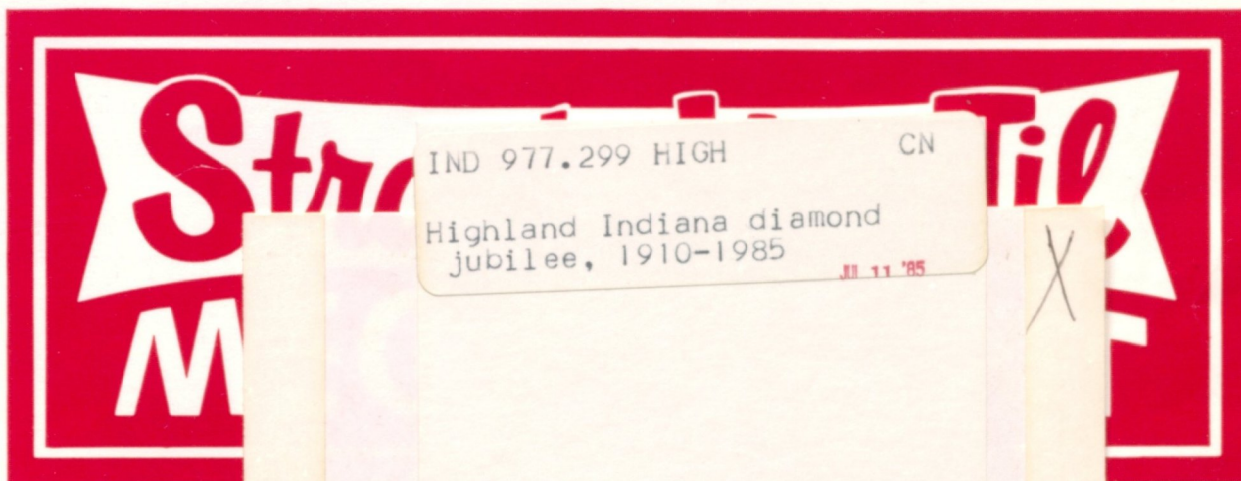
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